$2.00 USA $2.50 CANADA £1 UK
CEREBUS
JAKA
STORY 1
114
SEP

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

This is getting strange.

It is now only a matter of a week or so since I wrote the second half of the Note from the President 112/113. Remember? Where I mentioned that I didn't want to be doing this — that what I really wanted to be doing was to work on **Jaka's Story**? Well, now I find that I can't get any kind of writing momentum up on this issue because there is a little voice in the back of my head reminding me that doing the five Notes from the President for 107 through 111 all at once has turned me into a typo-hater (not quite as psychotic as Diana Schutz but leaning in that direction) since I had the luxury of fine-tooth-combing those five for about three weeks each while their respective issues were being prepared. The little voice reminded me that if I do the Note from the President **now** as I'm starting the issue, I'll have the two or three weeks necessary to fix it up nice 'n' purty for y'all — likewise with the letters page which I'll be doing later this week when I'm back home. (I'm writing this at thirty-five thousand feet en route from San Francisco to Detroit to pick up Zolastraya and then on to Toronto and thence to Kitchener.) However that does mean that I have only marginally added to the story-line since last issue's Note and (having resolved to discuss nothing but matters related to the story-line in this space for the duration of **Jaka's Story**; if you think **you're** sick of hearing how fucked up I think the Industry is, you could not imagine how bored **I've** become with the subject) I consequently have little to add right here, right now.

Someone took me to task for revising history and claiming that Jaka was not based on Deni. They were going by Deni's Note in Cerebus #6 which stated that the story-line was a wedding present to her. It was, but it was more or less a cautionary tale trying to inform her obliquely (if not opaquely) of strong emotional ties I still felt for the woman Jaka was based on — who became an exotic dancer (read stripper) shortly after Jaka first appeared. The emotions depicted in the drugged Cerebus reflected the feelings I had toward the mistress I had at the time Deni and I got married. Three menacing figures in that story were named, anagrammatically, out of Deni's last name and my mistress' last name (Loubert and Hitchens became Tchens, Trebu and Lohi). I was naive and ridiculous and the poorest imaginable husband material (still am) but my subconscious was at least able to dredge up what I considered a particularly interesting character out of a singularly unstable period of my life. The really interesting thing to me as the creator of Jaka is that even though I can trace her origins from Deni's wedding present to what I felt for Sally to the lingering allure of Lynn, she resembles these three not in the slightest (except for having Lynn's hair). I had a very clear picture of her from the very beginning. I always found her easy and enjoyable to draw.

But the most appealing quality about her is that she has led a simple, almost completely uneventful life (almost). Unlike most of the characters in the book there is no need to pick and choose among the myriad forces, incidents and relationships that shape a character. Virtually everything that makes Jaka Jaka can be covered in pretty short order, and the resultant person is pretty basic and easy-to-understand.

I admire the character far more than the other characters in the book. Cerebus is too much of a born loser; willfully self-destructive. Astoria is too single-minded and humourless. Lord Julius is always "on"; the Roach too out of touch with anything approximating reality, even the Elf is too mind-lessly happy all the time. When I'm writing them I'm observing from a discreet distance. I'm interested, but not to the extent of wanting to have dinner with them or anything like that. Jaka on the other hand is someone I would happily spend a lot of time with. She embodies those qualitites I always took for in a woman. She has a very simple way of thinking for which she is unapologetic. She's loaded with common sense and self-confidence. She is direct and has a low threshold for bull-shit. She has virtually no interest in material possessions though she has an appreciation of them. She is almost certainly on the top rung of the karmic ladder and won't be back for another life-time.

Or rather, she **was.**

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to pull out my notebook and see if I can't do right by her.

CEREBUS

NO. 114 SEPTEMBER 1988

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Background, cover-colour and tones

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

Circulation
26,000

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to Cerebus 119)

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to Cerebus 130)

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to Cerebus 136)

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PROLOGUE

NURSE WAS THE first person she knew.

Nurse was a large northern woman; ill-educated.

She had been there from the time Jaka was only three.

Early each morning, she awakened Jaka, pulling aside the heavy TCapmin drapes of Jaka's corner bedroom (facing the small lake).

"Rise and shine."

Nurse's "rise and shine" carried with it the undertone of malicious resignation peculiar to mothers whom Terim (in her infinite mercies) has seen fit not to bless with live births of their own.

Each morning, Nurse's "rise" rose in the hammer-blow abruptness of Palnu's early light, pregnant with more than its fair share of "i's"; and her "shine" shone, a choppy monosyllable; like a sneeze unconsumated or an execution deferred.

Riiise.

And shine.

Riiise.

And shine.

A snore-like mantra honed to monotonous perfection; as enervating an ode to the new day as "bring out your dead" or "leeches for the afflicted." Unquestionably, it would have provoked a more immediate and enthusiastic response from grieving relatives or a plague victim than it did from a sleepy-eyed four-year-old.

Riiise.

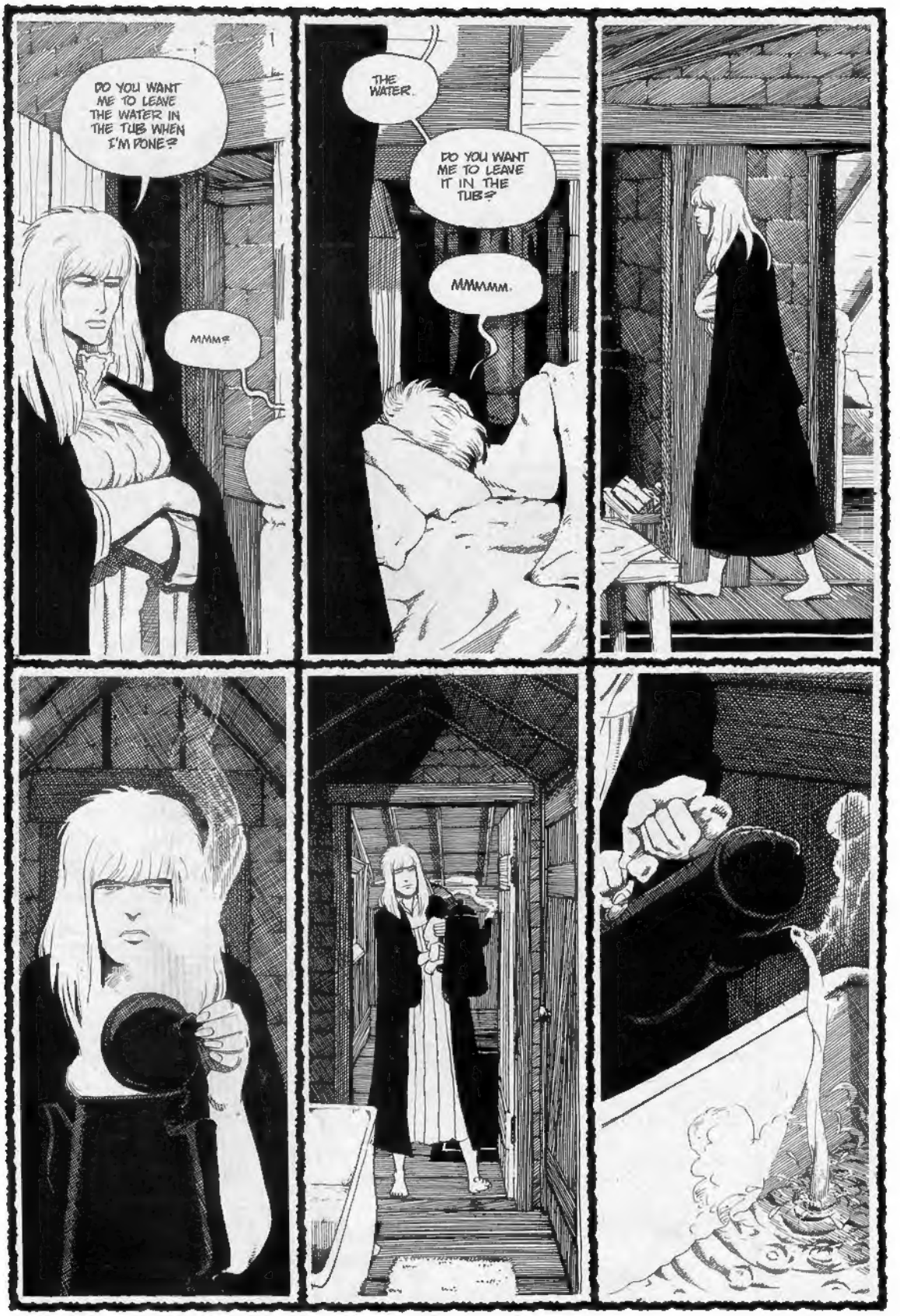
And shine, Jaka.

Riiise.

And shine.

RICK.
MM.
RICK!
MM!
TIME TO GET UP.
MM.

KA CHUNK KA CHUNK KA CHUNK
KA CHUNK KA CHUNK KA CHUNK
SSSSSH


DO YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE THE WATER IN THE TUB WHEN I'M DONE?
MMM?
THE WATER.
DO YOU WANT ME TO LEAVE IT IN THE TUB?
MMMMM.

HAVING RISEN (THE "shine" part was both conversational formality and small irony for Nurse was, in fact, thoroughly intolerant of any outward display of morning cheerfulness – or cheerfulness at any **other** time of the day, for that matter), Jaka faced her morning bath.

As a child of privilege (being one of Lord Julius' few heirs), it would be imagined such ritual would take the form of a leisurely and self-indulgent soak until, fingers shriveled and toes puckered, she would emerge, fragrant and refreshed, from the perfumed waters.

And such it might very well have been, had her guardian been any but the funereal Nurse, steeped (as she was) in the muddy brew of arcane medical convictions endemic to the northern tribes whose grim blood flowed dourly through her resentful veins.

Vapours, of course, were the greatest danger. When water was heated, it released odorless, colourless and undetectable mists into the air capable of incapacitating the unwary bather.

And the vapours were not the only cause for concern.

The mere act of lying down for an extended period in water caused blood to thin and pool about one's backbone leading (inevitably, of course, like most of Nurse's consequences) to an exaggerated curvature of the spine (like the old men gathered at the gates on Market Day, their bent postures betraying youths misspent lolling carelessly beneath the corrupting surfaces of ponds and streams).

And the vapours and spinal damage were not the only dangers. There was the perfume.

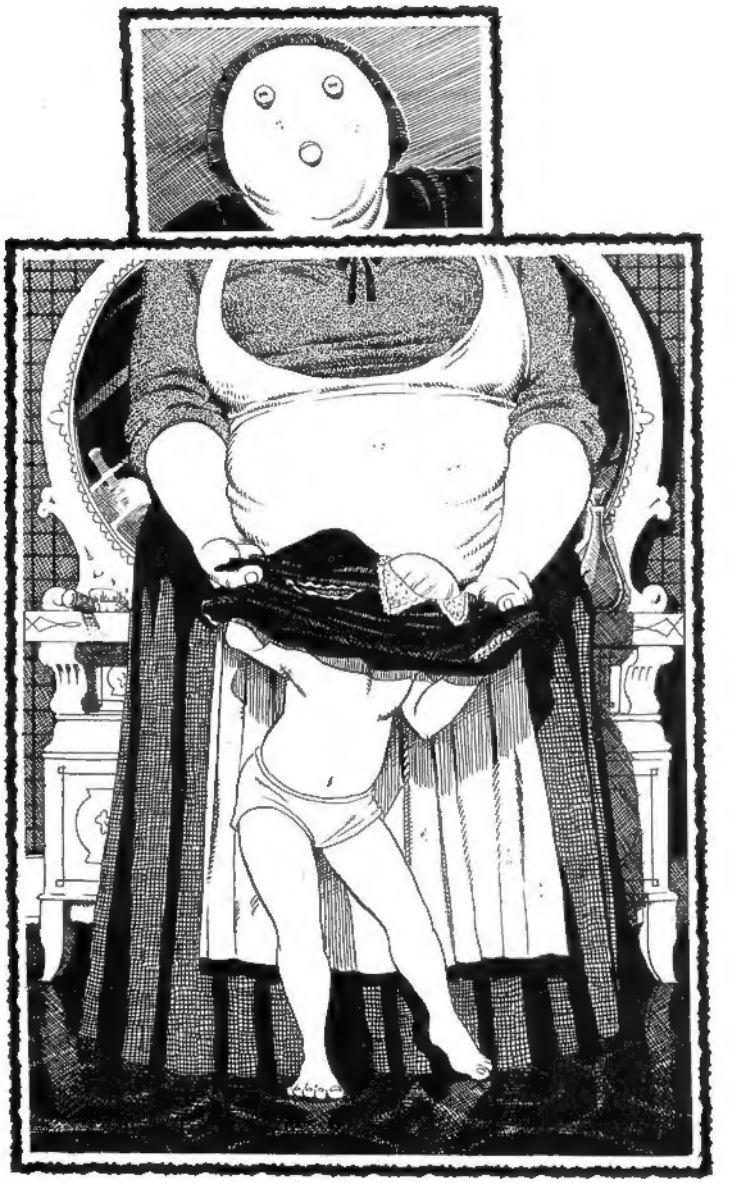
O perfidious scent.

O pernicious oil.

Seeping down, down like groundwater through porous rock down, down until it was halted, arrested; accumulating and coagulating within the vulnerable tissues; there to rot until the day when, inevitably (oh, yes), the flesh would peel away in blackened and bloody strips from the very bone.

So it was that Jaka found herself each morning in her own hand-carved Tcapmin marble tub knee-deep in icy well water in the sure grip of Nurse who (with firm-bristled scrub brush, a solid bar of good home-made lye soap and a lifetime of highly-developed ill-will) scraped mailciously at the few traces of grime and smudges that had managed to form since the previous morning, as if stripping twenty years worth of barnacles from a rotting hull.

All the while, nearby, the most advanced water-heating system as could be purchased with inflated Palnan crowns stood, the occasional hollow 'pong' sound its only outward sign of resentment at being made to keep its fatal vapours to itself.



DRESSING TIME was uneventful.

Jaka, through bleary eyes and with a fresh layer of her skin flayed into being, would attempt to anticipate the incoming trajectory of her clothing; clenched and twisted about Nurse's ham-like fists like a garroting wire. Starched lace would rake her forehead and eyelids; the sharpened disc of a metal button would catch the tender underside of ear or nostril. Arm, wrist and elbow would bend imaginatively in directions for which they were never intended. A muscular jerk and snap brought her underpants to their desired position (raising her, in the process, an inch or so off the polished marble floor). Engulfed in her own dress, Jaka would reel drunkenly (the collar dragged this way and that in search of her head) until hauled upright and admonished to "stand still". Her socks, for some reason known only to the unfathomable Nurse, were always at least two sizes too small for her so that the donning of them took the form of a wrestling event between unevenly-matched opponents. Likewise with the hard black shoes whose lacing brought the daily ritual to a bone-cramping climax.

THE WATER'S ALMOST COLD. ARE YOU GOING TO HAVE A BATH?
MMMM?
I SAID
THE WATER'S ALMOST COLD
ARE YOU GOING TO TAKE A BATH?
MMM
BOTH
TAP TAP TAP TAP
FINE!

MORNING
PUT SOME CLOTHES ON
DON'T I EVEN GET A KISS?
Peck
NOW PUT SOME CLOTHES ON
I DON'T KNOW THAT WASN'T MUCH OF A KISS. HOW ABOUT A BEST-TWO-OUT-OF...
I'M GOING TO PUT SOME CLOTHES ON..
SEE? WATCH ME.
I'M GOING TO PUT SOME CLOTHES ON RIGHT NOW

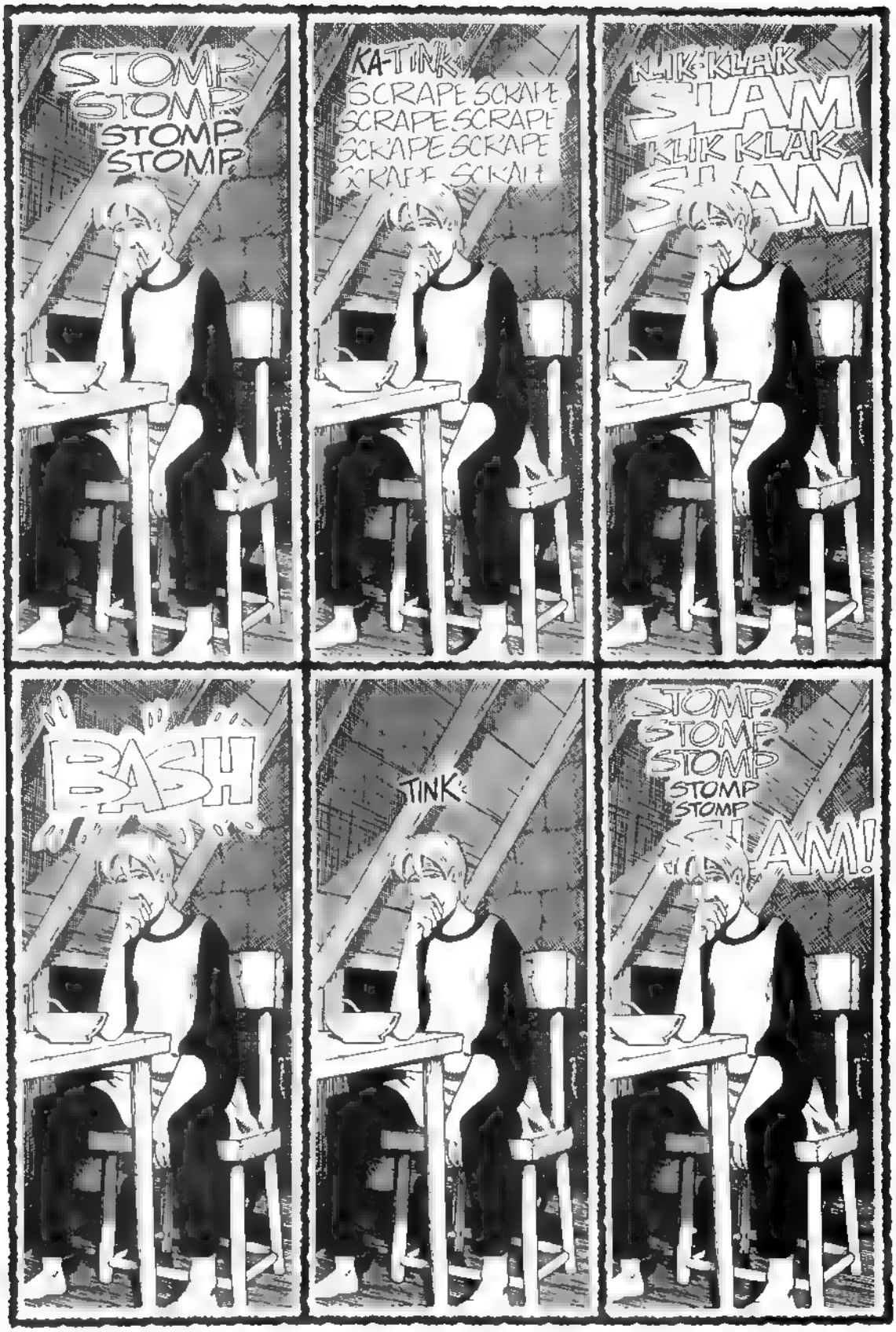
"RISE AND shine" required only token quiescence (in fact, little more than a vague imitation of wakefulness) . . . if bath time, on the whole, was made up of stoic resignation and a nurtured tolerance for lacerating friction . . . if dressing time involved the passive mastery of inanimate fabrics . . . breakfast time was the most traumatic of Jaka's daily routines, involving as it did her active participation in subjecting herself to that which was irredeemably unpleasant.

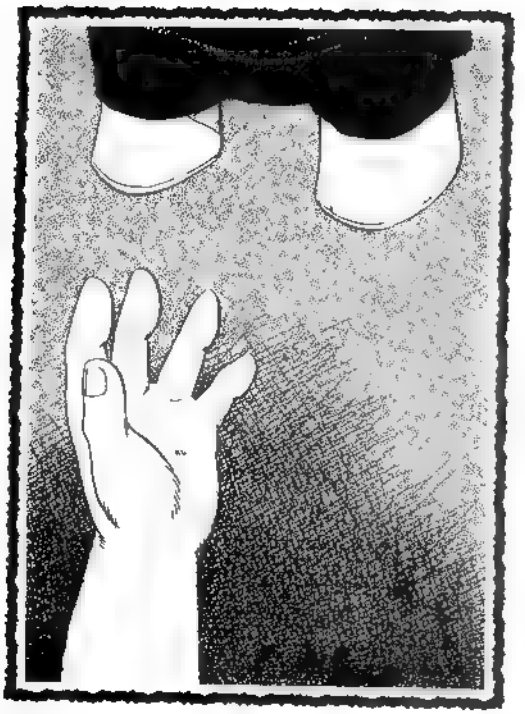
To call Nurse's porridge irredeemably unpleasant is to compliment it extravagantly. For, though she had mastered the **theory** of porridge-making (to wit, the simple addition of oat grain, coarsely ground and unbolted, to a pot of briskly boiling water; said mixture then stirred into a thickened and nearly flavourless paste), her basic distrust of the vapours released by heated water lurked never far below the surface of what passed for her conscious mind. As a consequence she was exceedingly generous with the coarsely-ground oat grain and stingy, to a point that faileth human reckoning, with the boiling water. The culinary atrocity which resulted more closely resembled mortar or hydraulic cement than it did a foodstuff.

The analogy, unfortunately for Jaka, extended to its taste.

TA PUM'
I THINK IT
WHAT ARE WE HAVING?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN "WHAT ARE WE HAVING?"
POKER DICE
WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE

YOU'RE GOING TO LOOK FOR WORK IN THAT OUTFIT ARE YOU?
OH
THAT'S RIGHT
MARKET DAY
IT'S KIND OF LATE, THOUGH, ISN'T IT?
I MEAN--ALL THE GOOD JOBS ARE USUALLY GONE BY ...
NOW
•KA-IINK
SCRAAAPE


STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP
KA-TINK
SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE SCRAPE
KLIK-KLAK
SLAM
KLIK KLAK
SLAM
BASH
TINK
STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP
SLAM!



AFTER BREAKFAST (or, more precisely, after the breakfast dishes had been cleared, scraped, stacked, washed, rinsed, dried and put away; after Jaka's place setting had been removed and her chair returned to its original position, square with the edge of the carpet; after all traces of moisture had been wiped from floor and fixture in the bath; after her bed had been made and the antique comforter pulled tightly over each corner to Nurse's grudging satisfaction; in short, after all traces of Jaka's passing had been eradicated), Jaka was, at last, given her doll, Missy. Missy had been given to her by a sympathetic member of the household staff (very much the exception that proves the rule) at the funeral of Jaka's mother a year previous.

Nurse, ever mindful of the certain death by suffocation Missy's cloth limbs represented, forbade Jaka to take the doll to bed with her. Thus, having endured the terror-filled night and torturous rituals of early morning, Jaka fairly shook with pleasure and relief at their daily reunion.

MISSY WAS, QUITE simply, Jaka's best friend in the world. In an environment of faces: Nurse's (and her narrow spectrum ranging from grim annoyance to apoplectic rage), the visages of functionaries and attendants (etched with careless disregard for a mere child), the darting glances filled with venomous loathing lavished on her, at dinner, by those relatives who coveted her proximity to the head tables and (even more so) by those who feared for the security of their own hard-won positions (in Lord Julius' Palnu, where a man could sit down to dinner a much-decorated senior officer in the vast military bureaucracy and rise, after coffee and liqueurs, a deputy undersecretary to the minister in charge of getting those leaves out of the eavestroughing before the snow flies, the usual palace intrigues tended to be somewhat magnified), Missy's expression of wide-eyed interest and open-mouthed amazement was Jaka's only shelter from a veritable storm of dour countenances.

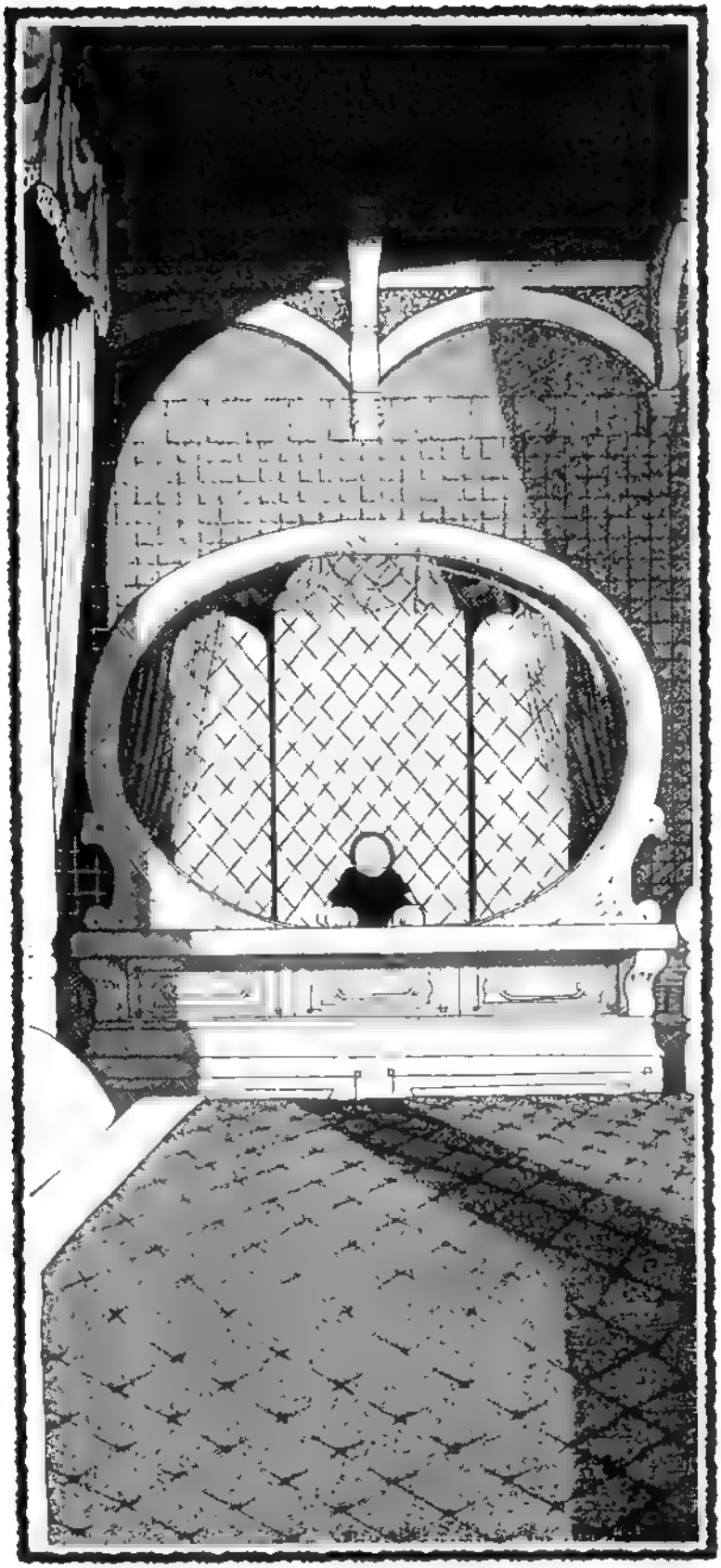
Missy listened, fascinated as ever, her forehead pressed to Jaka's cheek as Jaka regaled her with tempests and trifles, stories and songs. During a favourite anecdote or adventure (Missy particularly adored any tale that concerned itself with the Mouse in the Mudhole; he of the white fur who weighed, according to his creator, twenty-dozen hundred and eleventy-twelve pounds), Missy's expression reflected a nearly religious adoration of her Mistress. And when Jaka would interupt her story-telling to point out some curiousity amid the flora and fauna along the half-mile walk to the playground (one of Nurse's many mottos held that "tired legs are obedient legs"), Missy would always turn the full measure of her attention to the object in question and then instantly return, with equal fascination, to the story's resumption without so much as batting a single shoe-button eye.

Mostly, Missy just listened. On occasion, she would have a question or comment, or was moved, in her high-pitched squeak of a voice, to sound some small note of appreciation.

But, mostly, Missy just listened.

Jaka had promised Missy that she would never die and leave Missy alone.

JAKA?
I'M GOING TO LOOK FOR WORK
OKAY?
CREAK
CREAK
CREAK



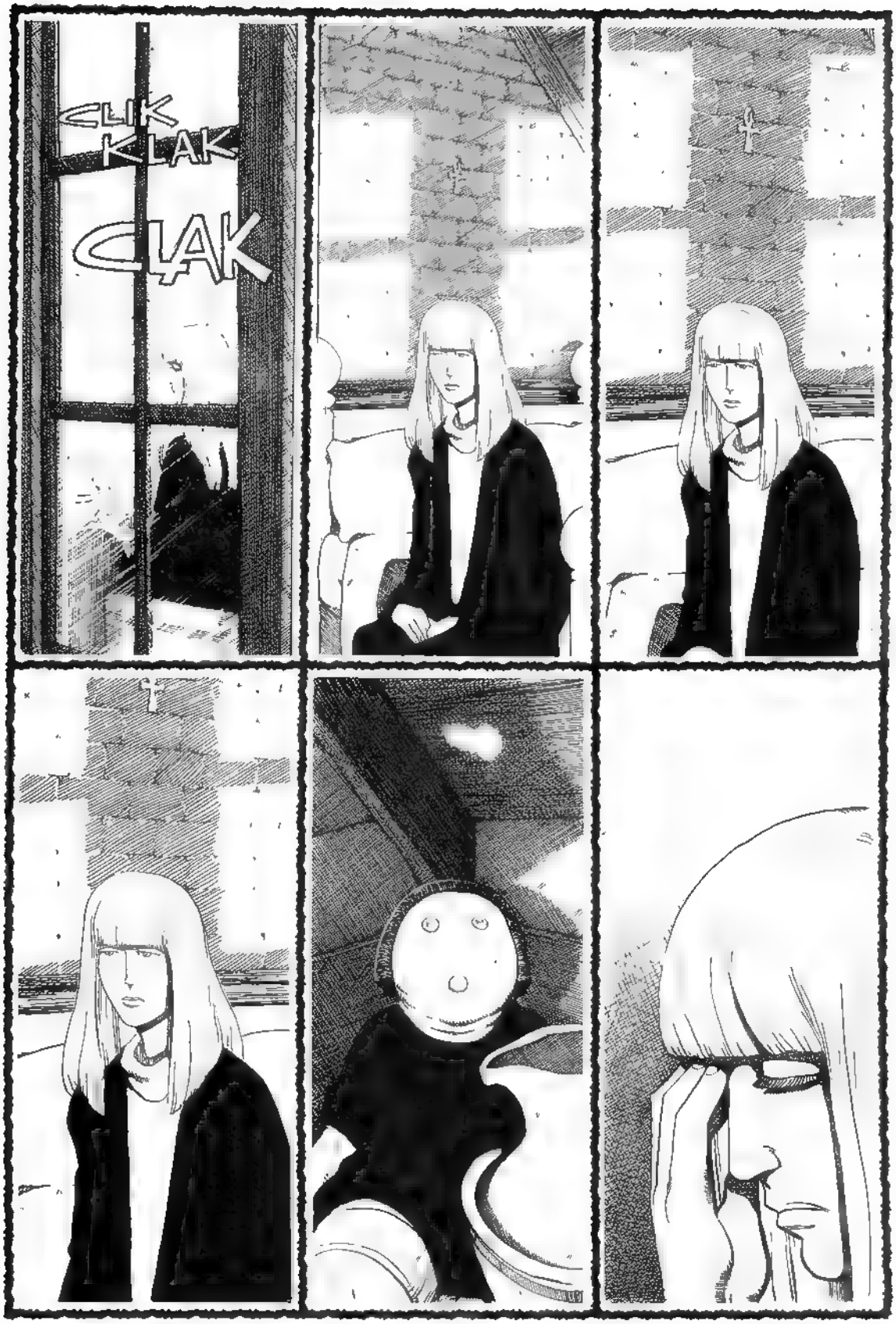
OVER THAT NIGHT, as Jaka slept soundly for the first time since her mother's funeral; as those wavering horrors which had filled the air between her and the room visible to her were banished at last; as she shared her solitude with Missy for the first time in their short life together . . .

Missy was transformed (or Missy transformed herself - that part was never clear); changed from a beloved confidant and a cherished off-spring to remote sentry and fearsome talisman, unmoving and unmoveable.

For her expression of perpetual amazement was gone next morning, replaced by a new reality of unblinking watchfulness, shoe-button eyes fixed firmly on the infinite, back-to-placid-back with her reflected image, the felt mouth home to an angelic choir of one, sustaining a pure, singular note of calm and serenity that shielded her mistress from both harm and worry . . . day upon day . . . season upon season . . . year upon year.

Until the years numbered seven and brought forth the night of Jaka's twelfth birthday.

The night she left Palnu forever.


CLIK
KLAK
CLAK

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

This is most of the mail we received on the conclusion of Church and State as of August 29. Not included are eight pages of questions from Andrew Wheeler (ninety-four in all) a seven page letter from Rob Plowman, and three or four others.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Issue one-hundred and eleven was/is a classic!' What more can be said — Just an awesome job!! Thanx for the great entertainment.

A dedicated reader,

Randy Sarbacher
922-1/2 3rd Street,
Clarkston, WA. , 99403

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave and Ger,

"So it won't explode when you fuck it." I thought someone had to answer the riddle about the hamster

Best,

Robert Dahlen
230 Funston Ave., #3,
San Francisco, CA , 94118

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Ms McKiel,

Please convey to Mr. Sim my delight in and satisfaction with the conclusion of Church a State in issue #111 . The term "shattering climax" comes to mind. How different from the image conveyed by that term in your big money league competitors — a ho-hum battle while a clown in a ridiculous costume shatters a mountain with his/her fists. (I am especially delighted that I can never predict **Cerebus**.) Here, a cosmological disgression shows us and him how insignificant **Cerebus** is in the universal scale, his doom is spoken in a few dry, terse words and he is left alone to contemplate the rubble of his life. Smashing, in both senses of the word!

Sincerely,

Rob Chilson
P.O. Box 10096,
Kansas City, MO , 64111

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I just wanted to congratulate you on finishing **Church and State.** Five (six? I started late) years of work completed. And all the time you should be celebrat ing you have to contend with all these distributor assholes. Jesus.

I just wrote to let you know that there are still a hell of a lot of us out here who love what you're doing, and are going to keep loving it for a hundred and eighty-nine more issues. Let Bud Plant blather about "plots that drone on and on." If he's too stupid to appreciate it that's his problem How the hell is a story supposed to have any power if it's three issues long? The day I read issue #111 I had just finished my last departmental exam, and that issue floored me If you can do that to a euphoric high school grad on the last day of school, you're doing good.

Admittedly, these last few issues haven't been the funniest things I've ever read, but if you get this far you're either bitching about the lack of ha-ha and have quit buying, or you've learned to appreciate the plot, the art, the characters, and everything else that makes **Cerebus** the best. (That sentence was a bit long.) I'm still buying.For what it's worth, you can add my support to that of Gerhard, Peter Laird, Kevin Eastman, Frank Miller and the others.

We appreciate you, Dave

Sincerely,

Stephen Notley

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Mr. Sim

Re: Issue 111, "Base Tranquility".

Brilliant

Yours in respect,

Terri Margaret Mirren

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Two days ago I bought and read issue 111.

Wow

The mythic grandeur and moral force of "Walking on the Moon" confirm my conviction that you, Chester Brown and Gilbert Hernandez are the three best writers in comic books. For sheer craft of storytelling, however, you have no peer. An example is pages 15-19 of issue 111, with their silent portrayal of the ruin that is the consequence of **Cerebus'** ambition.

I could go on and on listing gems ("If I had meant you to bounce I would have said 'bounce' ", "the full flowering of male-dominated civilization at its apex"; the sequence of facial expressions in panels 1-4 of page 11 in issue 107; pages 2 to 7 of issue 110; . . .) and trying to explain what's so great about them, but you already know all that. So I'll just say; thank you and don't stop.

Yours 'til #300

Adam Stephamides
905 S Busey Ave.,
Urbana, IL., 61801

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Jesus fucking Christ.

That was incredible. I read #111, and just fell back in my chair and stared gaping for a while. That was incredible (I say again). I had to go and read the Flaming Carrot issue again to remind myself that you could write humor, too.

Holy fucking Shit

The funny thing was, I was expecting to find Iest decimated and **Cerebus** reduced to nothing (politically speaking) — and I was still overwhelmed. Those last few pages were devastating. The slow draw-back at the end was nothing short of amazing.

Judas fucking Priest.

Nasty, too. That parting shot by the Feiffer Watcher about his second marriage was cruel Deserved, to be sure But cruel, anyway. His obvious distaste of **Cerebus** from the beginning was explained, justified, and shared.

Harry fucking carey.

When the hell is the Mike Grell Jam gonna come out? When the hell are ANY of the Jams gonna come out? Jesus fucking Christ (am I repeating myself?), you start it as a semi-regular 3 years ago, and have shown us one Jam since — admittedly, an excellent one, but, uh, y'know, where's, uh, da shtuff, anh?

Holy fucking Cow (sorry, but I'm on something like a roll here).

I feel a bit insulted about the Note about how unstable us Aardvark fans are Do you really think we'd all be so influenced by your ramblings that we'd start jumping out windows? This is as silly as all those court cases where they try to blame Dungeons and Dragons on teenagers shooting their parents in the middle of the night. Look, I've played D&D for four years, and I hardly ever shoot my

parents in the middle of the night.

Great fucking Scott.

Keith R A DeCandido
716 E 235th Street,
Bronx, NY., 10466

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

It seems that you've struck a nerve. Unlike some, I'm not too upset over that fact that the conclusion to this long awaited story was filled with your "message" to the world. We're each allowed a certain amount of time on the soap box. That doesn't bug me.

What bugs me is that, while you spend most of issue 111 criticizing the bumbling monster known as The United States of America (which is perfectly all right by me), you also -along the way — switch sides and act just like that monster which you're having so much fun criticizing. Am I being vague? Here, let me clear things up.

A couple of years ago — as we all know — the last (for some time) of America's space shuttles unfortunately exploded. I am not unsympathetic. Like the rest of North America, I was upset and moved. But at the same time, I was appalled. I was appalled by the way the media chose to represent and manipulate that unfortunate accident and the way they chose to manipulate the public. If you bring up that tragedy now-a-days, all people will remember and say is, "Oh, that's when that teacher died." Yeah,that's when that teacher died. Only, I recall there being seven members on that flight. Seven human beings. Six of which trained their entire lives to be on that mission. Six of which are never given the recognition they deserve.

After the accident took place, that "female teacher" was plastered on the cover of every magazine in America. Look everyone, look — a new martyr for America. Read how she boldly gave her life. Hear about her life at home, at school , as a child, etc. etc. Yet not a word is set aside for the other six members ("other", because they're less significant, right?).

I don't solely mean to point the finger at you, Dave. You, like everyone else in North America (as well as myself and the world) often finds themselves a good little servant to the media and to television in general . All we want to know is how many people died in this morning's US/Iranian airline disaster. All we care about is who Gary Hart is fuckin' who Jim Bakker porked. Screw dignity and screw compassion . . . all that matters is gossip and ratings.

But now I've gone off on a tangent. A subject no less important, but still a subject for another time. What I'm getting at is that, because of the media, the Reagan administration, and what have you, you and everyone else only remember the "female teacher" because that's what they want you to remember. Who gives a crap about the others, they weren't laymen, so they don't matter.

Am I right? I mean, do you know the names of the other six off the top of your head? I don't. Sure, I could go to the encyclopedia and look up their names, but I'll probably never remember them. At the same time, I'll probably never forget the name of that "female teacher". And it's not like I had any choice in the matter. The name was just drilled into my brain, just like the "Pledge of Allegiance" and commercials for "chicken littles".

I don't know about you, but I find it appalling. No, it's worse than that. It's not appalling — it's just utterly pathetic.

Sincerely,

Chris Romano
Pacific Palisades, CA.,

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave Sim and Gerhard,

I happily inform you that you can add me to the list of the people who won't be fooled. The Man in the Moon is by no means the nice story-teller he seems to be. Sure, he goes to a great length to appear as a severe but fair observer and judge, a lover of Terim sickened by the original sin committed by Tarim. He really seems to worship the Moon as a part of Terim's corpse and he can't stand the petty humans who desecrate her further. But think of the many questions left unanswered: who appointed him judge and observer in the first place? How come such a peaceful worker is so all-knowing? Why is he aware of the future? Why does he point out the existence of redemption and, at the same time, lay stress that **Cerebus** will die alone, unmourned and unloved?

Yet he's smart enough to justify **Cerebus'** suffering by the rape of Astoria rather than the slaughter of the people he sent to the wars. This lends a subtle touch of authenticity to George the Moon Lover, the being disgusted by the uses of a male civilization's science. Yet — again — why would the Watcher carry on with the task of living when he states that the universe is godless and meaningless?

Alright, just write my name under the title "People who will never make head or . . ."

Wait! Cancel that ! I can see it now! Issue 112 will narrate the origin of George who's in fact Prof. Charles X Claremont; and 113 will bear a new title: "What if . . ."

I guess I'm better at double-guessing than Blakely.

Thanks for your commitment and don't paint yourself a black moustache.

Jean Poullot
112 av. du 18 Juin 1940
92500 Rueil Malmaison
FRANCE

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave Sim,

On the eve of your finishing **Church and State** I felt the urge to write and express my opinion.

I started reading **Cerebus** with issue 80. Kind of handy for me you used that for your cut off point and I then picked up all the Swords and **High Society** reprints and all that usual new fan crap. By the by somewhere in with this letter there should be a money order for **Church and State** Vol. 1 also.

I kind of wonder if Dave Sim ever writes these letters to Jules Feiffer saying: "I'm your biggest fan! I collect all your stuff! Can I get a sketch of Ronald Reagan saying something stupid from you? When are you going to put out another book? What days are you going to be at the San Diego ComiCon so I know when to go? I only buy the Village Voice for your cartoons!" — naw . . . well just a thought.

You know, now that we know the aardvark is going to ". . . live only a few more years. Die alone, unmourned and unloved." doesn't this put a damper on further stories? Like giving away the ending of a mystery novel. I can't help thinking, What? Is this worth sticking around for the next ten years for? To see this guy die alone and unloved? All these hassles he goes through, all the stupid unthinking selfish things he does and rather than learn from his mistakes and go on, he dies. Like watching John Carpenter's The Thing, as soon as Kurt Russel says none of them are getting out alive you get the feeling well then why should I bother with the rest of the film? I prefer characters who are smart enough to know when they're screwing up. **Cerebus** has always been ambitious and taken what he wanted. Now as a barbarian that may have been the only way to survive but in the course of the series he has allowed himself to be manipulated time and again by Astoria, lost the only woman who really loved him, has gained and lost the Prime Ministership and the Popehood and no matter how hard he tries or how close to his ultimate goal he hits, it is always snatched away from him and he is left alone and with nothing to show for his efforts. As your esteemed Judge is fond of saying, for most people there would be a message in this. Why should I bother reading about someone who doesn't see that?

The last ten or so issues have been pretty heavy and depressing content I personally would like to see a touch of the old humor before going on to the next series. **Cerebus** is one of the few comics that can give me the giggles and I kind of miss that

I've said my piece Good luck to you Dave in your next 189 issues.

Bill Mallory
10319 Thanksgiving Lane,
San Diego, CA., 92126

★★★★★★★★★★

Dave,

By the time the blue green fungus came up I had a feeling that a happy ending was out of the question. I haven't felt this uplifted by a comic in a long time. I think I 'll go out and play with a loaded
weapon

Thanks,

Patrick Hayes
1312 Sandra Way,
Redlands, CA., 92374

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I don't care if anyone says your an asshole, you are so funny sometimes I laugh so hard I almost piss myself dry! I just finished reading The Final Ascension & Walking on the Moon and hooboy wuz it great, but why weren't there any girls with big woo-woos (not counting Fred & Ethel)

One last thing, why do people think when they start **Cerebus** it's confusing, I started at 57 and I understood it even without reading any prior issues? What d'ya think of my thrashing **Cerebus** ANH?

Sincerely,

Spide Savia
175 Milltown Road,
Springfield, NJ , 07081

P S. Also I wanted to see if you would print a letter from a worthless town in the middle of the Toxic State Dave Schwartz if you're reading this Drop Dead Buttheid

P P.S. Ger, super backgrounds and awesome moon — really and wuz it hard drawing the faces on the black tower?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave & Gerhard,

As the North London **Cerebus** tutorial group has now grown to three, and despite, or maybe because of the fact that more questions have been raised than put to rest, we (the undersigned) having agreed that the conclusion to **Church and State** is a suitably auspicious occasion on which to refine our thoughts, have, therefore, bearing in mind the necessity to open a letter concerning such an event with as long a sentence as would be prudent, in order to parallel both the effort of creating this epic novel , and also the ecstasy of a climax, decided to write you a letter

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Bourne, Nigel Fletcher & Joseph Melchior

P S. It makes sense to us that the appearance of an aardvark, and possibly his being in a position of power, should be the signal for the next ascension, and the end of the present cycle Only a limited number of people are aware of this and the information is contained in the ancient texts referred to in the story This would explain why Weisshaupt and Astoria are so interested in **Cerebus**, and their attempts to manipulate him. **Cerebus** becoming Pope was unforeseen by either of them, and was followed by their increasingly desperate attempts to regain control of him Weisshaupt's realisation when he was dying, that **Cerebus** might actually succeed, spurred him on to assist **Cerebus** (and to oppose Astoria) by providing him with the use of the cannons, and, later, with the golden sphere (via Posey), which he's also know about from the texts.

2-What **Cerebus** gains from his ascension is a series of revelations from the mysterious judge, rather than the raw power that he and previous aspirants had assumed would be their reward Knowledge can be power, and how **Cerebus** uses his newfound knowl edge will determine how far he can shape his own destiny.

3-If we accept that the Judge's comments that accurately describe the current American space programme firmly set **Cerebus** 6000 years, or so, in our past, it follows that there has been a huge catastrophe in the meantime, corresponding to the Flood as described in the Old Testament and elsewhere. This time scale would also correspond with the Hebrew calendar, by which we are in the year 5748

4-Is the Aardvark at the stake **Cerebus**, or the previous Aardvarkian prime minister of Iest?

5-What was the surgery that Cirin and Circe were discussing (Castration? Abortion?), and what wouldn't burn at the stake?

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave

Since I first picked up a copy of issue No. 30, I have taken great pleasure in reading **Cerebus**. However, I would like to tell you what an extra delight the latest few issues have been

I'm sure that the fine artwork on the covers of issues No. 105 through No. 111 is appreciated by all **Cerebus** fans, but as an astronomer they hold special meaning for me. Gerhard's detail of the crater Archimedes and the Appennine Highlands, which appeared on the cover of No. 106, stands out in particular, as does the nebula on the cover of No. 111.

It has also been fun to see you mention Mars, Deimos and other astronomical objects in the course of your mythological unraveling of the universe. In doing this, believe it or not, you are making a contribution to public awareness and understanding of astronomy.

Dave, I heartily agree that all the impossible worlds and cartoon depictions of space that come out of graphic arts hold a very important and even sentimental place in the imagination But the old space motifs really get overworked when artists do not draw from the current treasury of astronomical discovery and instead fall back on a resurrection of cliches. Thus I find it very satisfying to see someone artistically incorporating elements of the real thing into their work The real universe is too beautiful a place to leave to a few astronomers like me.

Thanks, and best wishes for your continued success

Sincerely,

Ivan Semeniuk
Instructor/Researcher
Astronomy
Ontario Science Centre

P.S. Come for a visit some time.

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DAVE SIM
Church
State

OH, LOOK! IT'S THEIR FIRST CON TOGETHER! ISN'T THAT CUUTE? Memphis Mini-Con in June of this year. Didn't make it out to Graceland since Zolastraya (Residents/Cure fan that she is) couldn't promise not to laugh at the Jungle Room.

Strange Hotel, too. Room service was available from 5:30 to 9:30 P.M. and they closed the bar around 10:00 Friday night because they didn't have any customers. (below) the determined expression of a self-publisher ready to Move Some Books. Notice her right elbow making room for a few more #1's. Sure sign of someone who's shared table-space at a con before.

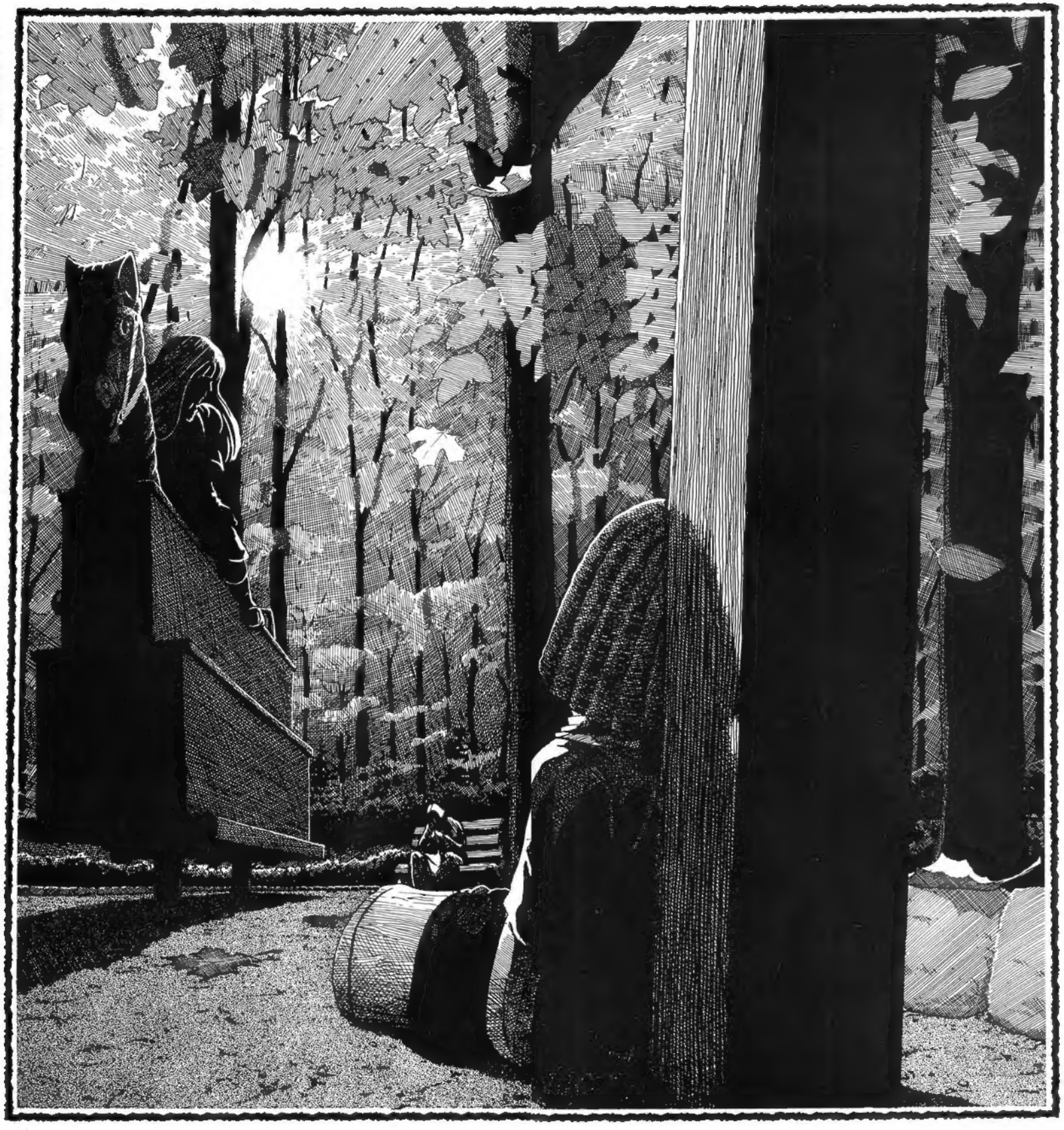
photos by Steven Patrick

CONSTRUCTED IN 1345 by workmen in the employ of Lord Tavers, Palnu's previous grandlord, as a battle trainer for his many nephews and young male cousins, he had been known for nearly four decades as Thunder.

Thunder was an ingenious combination of several heavy iron springs and inter-locking wood partitions rigged to two large hinges at either end. Set in motion by adolescent limb and muscle, the massive springs strained to the breaking point and then established an irregular and violent bucking motion (accompanied by the agonized screams of metal-on-metal) which racked Thunder's form from stem to stern. Many a scraped and fractured limb or cracked and blooded skull was suffered (along with much hilarity at the victim's plight) in Thunder's hey-day.

Even Lord Tavers himself (wearied from the day's *affaires d'état*) was known to join enthusiastically in the rough-and-tumble from time-to-time. He marked his own success at riding Thunder by the distance his smaller relatives (including the young Julius) would hurtle through the air before striking the ground.

His record, before age and illness limited his physical exertions, was said to be four and one-half metres.



TO JAKA HE wasn't Thunder. He was Magic, a gentle and intelligent horse who rocked an inch-or-so forward and an inch-or-so back as she rode him in triumphant procession about the Palnu City Coliseum (his metal innards grinding lightly with a noise like the musings of a perplexed monkey). Her practised gestures were in faithful imitation of the riders she had seen at Pageant from her seat two boxes down and one row to the rear of her illustrious uncle (Pageant was the name given to those thrice-yearly entertainments inaugurated by Lord Julius for the amusement of the Palnan aristocracy and "other over-dressed ne'er-do-well's").

It was never quite clear, in the Pageant Game, what it was that Jaka had done to merit the thunderous ovation that greeted her arrival at the stadium. But thunderous it was (without exception) and reserved for her alone; a solitary and noble rider, nodding first left and then right in stately and imperial fashion, acknowledging her tumultuous greeting (which greeting included her own Missy, face bright with adoration, slightly to the left and rear of the reviewing stand).

Jaka had once asked Nurse, in hopes of adding a certain authenticity to the Pageant Game, if Pageants were ever held to honour little girls as they were held to honour war heroes and adventurers. Nurse had replied (most emphatically) that it was the duty of little girls to clean their plates so they grow up to be strong and healthy mothers and have many strong and healthy babies . . . and there were no Pageants to honour *that*, make no mistake, and there never *would* be.

Thus enlightened, Jaka had briefly considered that she was being honoured for having given birth to the strongest and healthiest baby of all time; Missy. Despite her best efforts to incorporate this new element, it became obvious that if Missy were, indeed, the strongest and healthiest baby of all time, well, it would only stand to reason that the strongest and healthiest baby of all time would *not* be at the left and slightly to the rear of the reviewing stand but *might*, rather, be something of an object of adoration herself.

Which led Jaka briefly (very briefly) to visualize herself seated on the reviewing stand while Missy rode Magic triumphantly before her, nodding in stately fashion as Jaka cheered herself hoarse, in concert with the hysterical throng.

Bad Missy.

Properly chastised (and agreeable as ever) Missy had returned to her prescribed role in the Pageant Game and was once more suitably awe-stricken as Jaka made entrance after entrance amid coloured torch flames and shrill fanfare.

When Jake turned five, she was at last granted permission to have Missy in her room over-night (on the strict condition that the doll and her homicidal little doll limbs confine themselves to the top of Jaka's bureau).